

THE WITCHER® WILD HUNT

SLAVIC ADAPTATION OF MUSIC

MARCIN PRZYBYŁOWICZ

MIKOLAI STROINSKI

WHO ARE WE?

MARCIN PRZYBYŁOWICZ

Music Director/Composer at CD PROJEKT RED

MIKOLAI STROINSKI

Freelance Video Game Composer

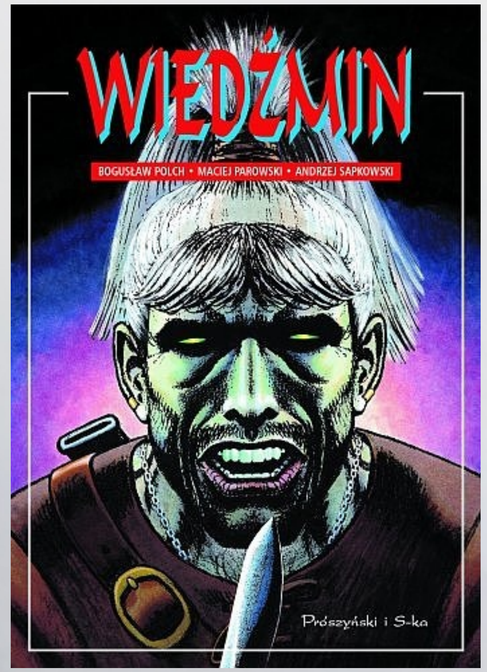
THE WITCHER 3 WILD HUNT



KEY FACTS
OF THE WITCHER FRANCHISE

THE WITCHER 3 WILD HUNT

- The Witcher started as a **book hero in 1980's**



art by Bogusław Polch
published by Prószyński i S-ka



published by SUPERNOWA

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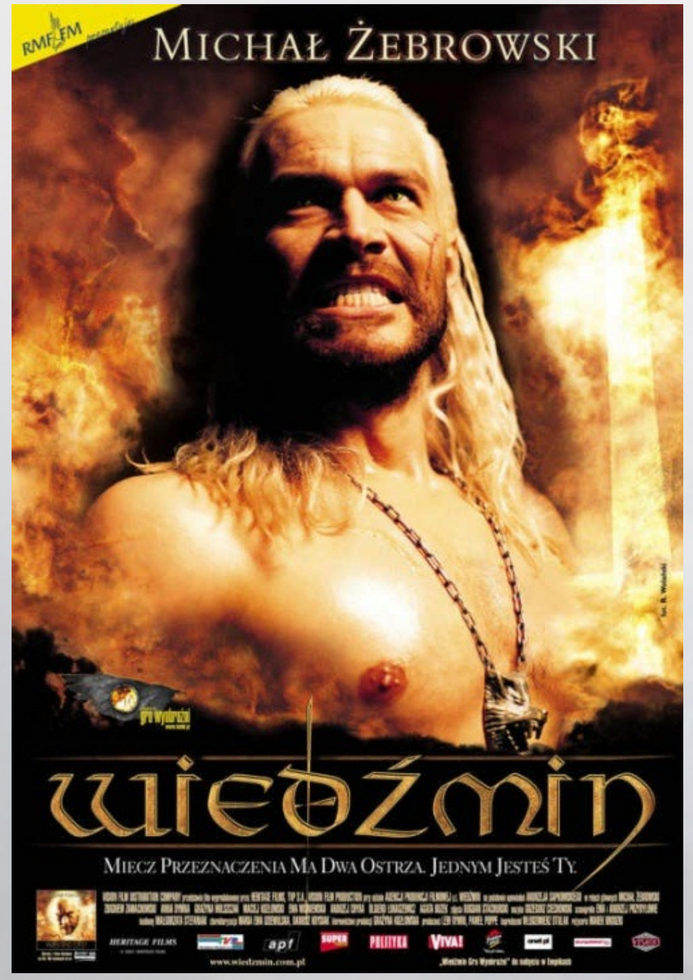
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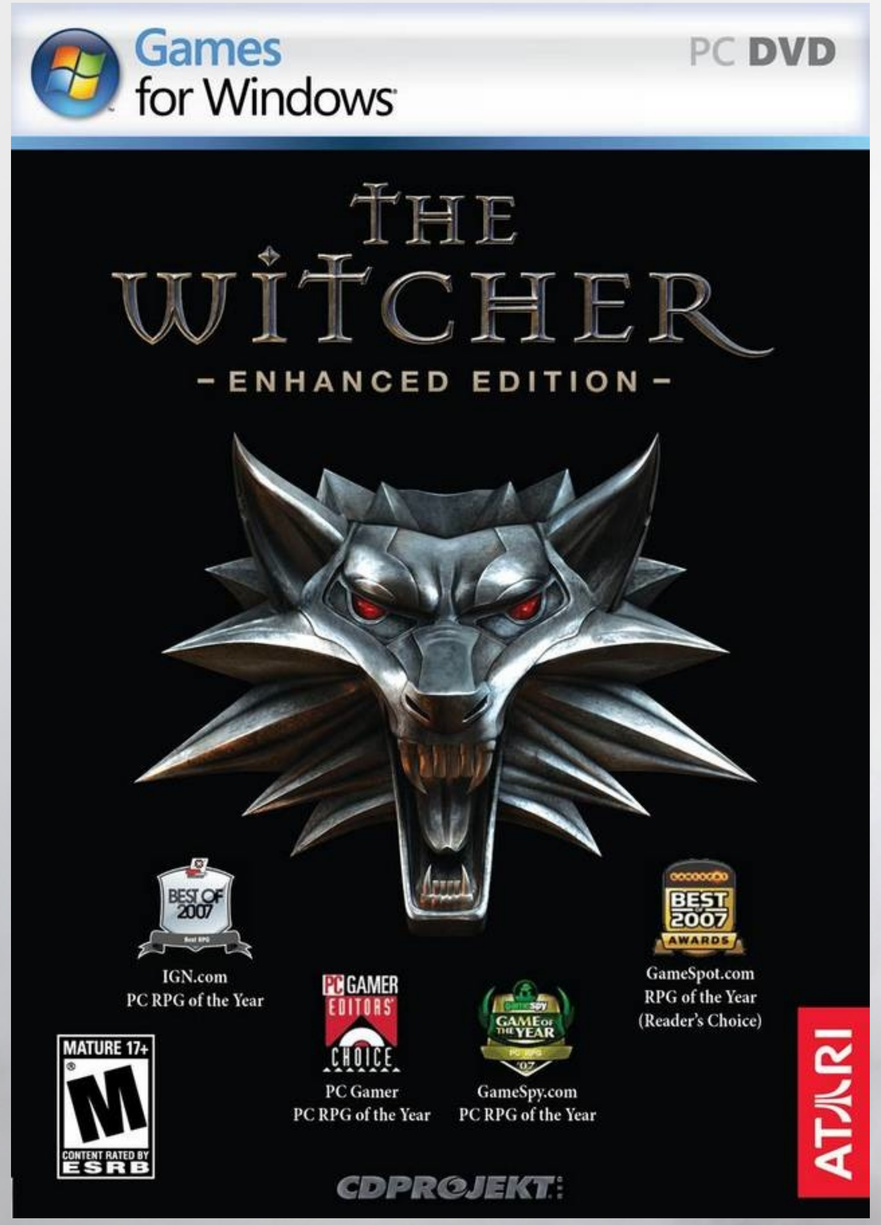
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produced by Lew Rywin / Vision Film Distribution

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- 2015 - **The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt** (Geralt as popculture icon)

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CHALLENGE

How to embrace the past and meet audience’s expectations towards The Witcher 3 music?



REDEFINING
MUSICAL STYLE FOR THE WITCHER 3

- The Witcher universe is heavily grounded in **slavic folklore**
- Dark fantasy setting
- Game's main feature - **gritty, mature, engaging story**
- Both **intimate and epic in storytelling**
- Nothing is good or bad, everything is in the gray zone
- **choices & consequences**
- **nonlinearity**

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PREPRODUCTION

- Mix **slavic folk** with **big contemporary sound**
- Design our own **adaptive music system** (and jump from Fmod to Wwise)
- Make music feel **linear** in a **non-linear** environment
- Budgets and costs of live recordings
- Don’t kill ourselves the with amount of music to compose
- Greater use of **leitmotifs** compared to previous Witcher games

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PREPRODUCTION

- Thematic work:
  - Main theme (legacy theme, 1st featured in TW1)
  - Eredin/Wild Hunt
  - Emhyr/Nilfgaard
  - Ciri
  - Love Theme
  - Bloody Baron
  - Ladies of the Wood
  - Witch Hunters
  - Elves
  - Lodge of Sorceressess (legacy theme, from TW2)
  - Assassins of Kings (legacy theme, from TW2)



TEAMING UP WITH PERCIVAL
(AND OTHER GREAT MUSICIANS)

- One of the most famous folk bands performing Slavic music
- Classical musical education vs. being self-taught: how did we get along?
- Why them?
- Why it worked?



RECORDING SESSIONS

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RECORDING SESSIONS

What we recorded - Baglama



Mikołaj Rybacki (Percival)



RECORDING SESSIONS

What we recorded - Kemenche



Katarzyna Bromirska (Percival)



RECORDING SESSIONS

What we recorded - Custom Hurdy-Gurdy



Robert Jaworski (Żywiołak)



RECORDING SESSIONS

What we recorded - Renaissance Fiddle



Robert Jaworski (Żywiołak)



RECORDING SESSIONS

What did we record - Bowed Gusli



Robert Jaworski (Żywiołak)



RECORDING SESSIONS

What did we record - Yaili Tambur



Amir Yaghmai



RECORDING SESSIONS

What did we record – Ghaychak



Amir Yaghmai



RECORDING SESSIONS

What did we record - Ghaychak





Amir Yaghmai

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RECORDING SESSIONS

What did we record - Viola



Andrew Duckles



RECORDING SESSIONS

- Other instruments:
  - Bouzouki, mandolin
  - Lute
  - Dulcimer
  - Tin flutes, medieval flutes
  - Electric & acoustic cello
  - Solo violin
  - Vocals (lots of them!)

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CHOICES...

- Instruments' natural tuning - most of them are in D-natural
- Great amount of improvised performances (we did improvised jam sessions)
- Focus on solo performances instead of standard orchestral pallette

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CHOICES...

...AND CONSEQUENCES

- We did whole score in **ONE KEY** - Dm
  - ...except few cues in Gm
- Improvised stuff transformed into great tavern/ Gwent cues
- Solo parts became core of the soundtrack
- **People really dig songs!**

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MUSICAL DIRECTION

- Don’t focus on the game as a set of mechanics under player’s disposal
- For us the story and its pacing is **the most important aspect** of the game
- **Make music matter**, have its own voice and story to tell
- It’s all about emotions
- **Scoring with songs** and pushing music towards the foreground

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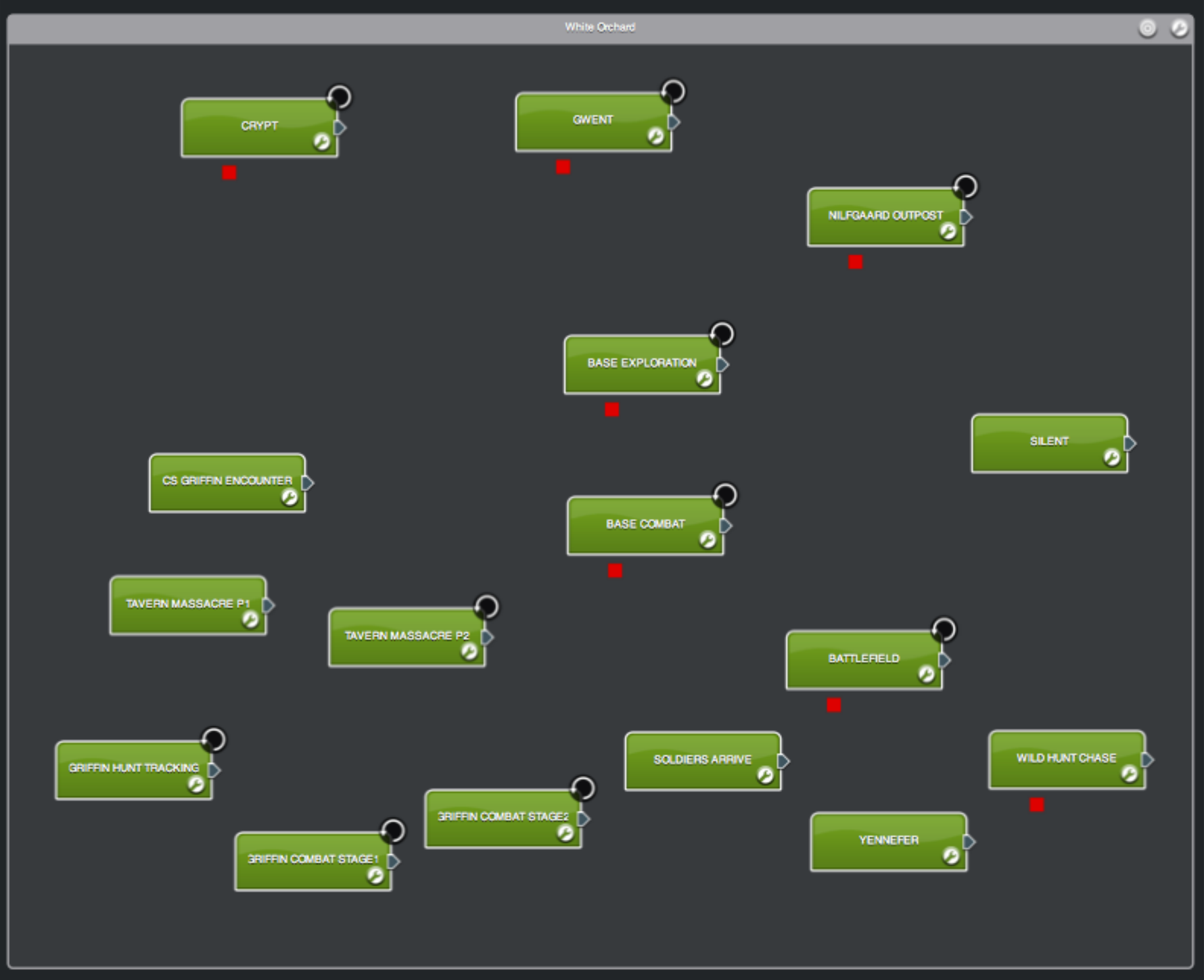
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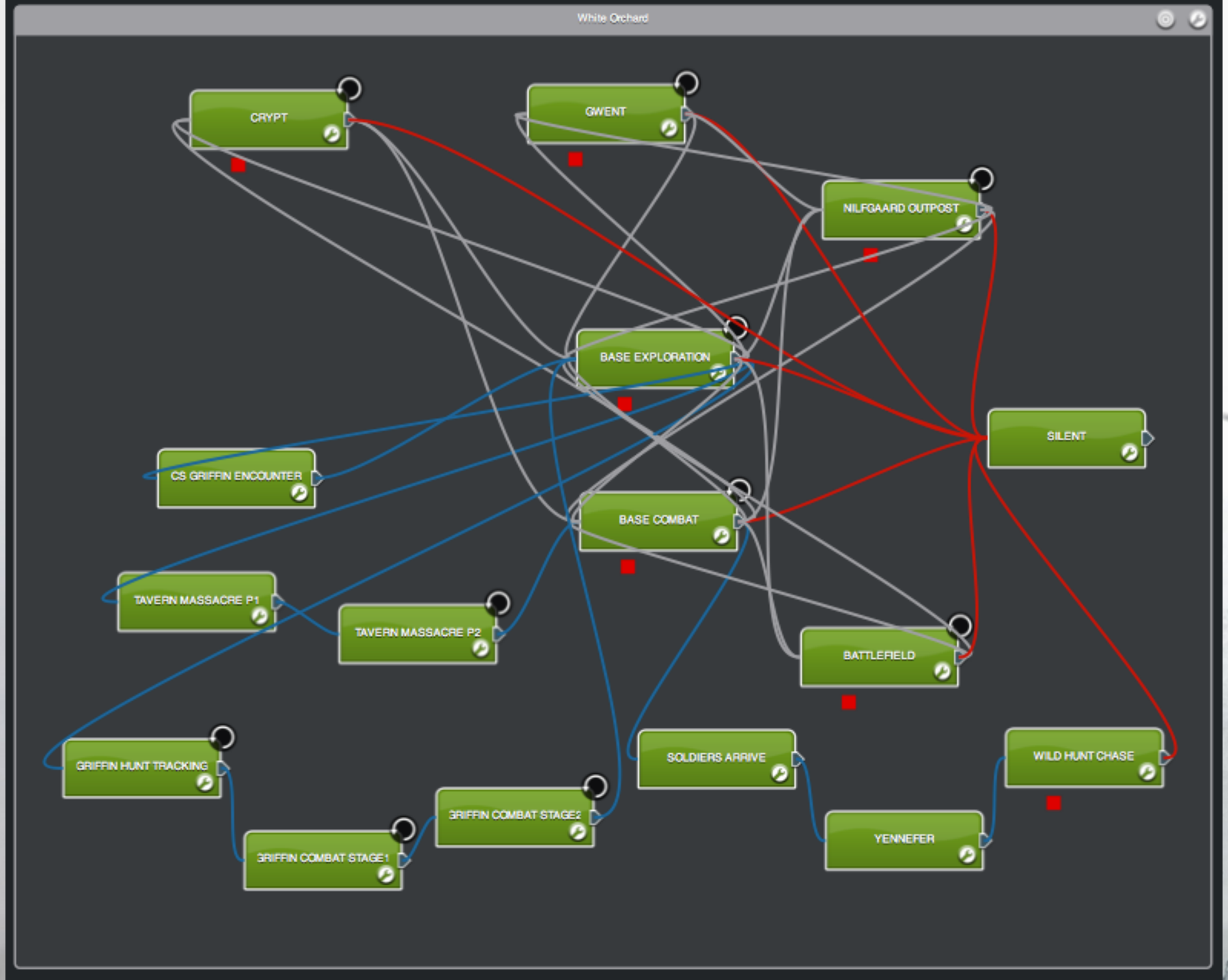


IMPLEMENTATION

- Goal: **responsive, adaptive music system** that would work in non-linear quests structures
- Use **layers and parameters** (duh)
- **Two pillars** - standard exploration/combat cues and tailored quest-specific music (cut-scenes, dialogue scenes, custom gameplay etc.)
- **Don’t sacrifice the music’s artistic value** and essence to perfect implementation solutions

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White Orchard
CRYPT
GWENT
NILFGAARD OUTPOST
BASE EXPLORATION
SILENT
CS GRIFFIN ENCOUNTER
BASE COMBAT
TAVERN MASSACRE P1
TAVERN MASSACRE P2
BATTLEFIELD
GRIFFIN HUNT TRACKING
SOLDIERS ARRIVE
WILD HUNT CHASE
GRIFFIN COMBAT STAGE2
GRIFFIN COMBAT STAGE1
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GRIFFIN COMBAT STAGE2
YENNEFER
GRIFFIN COMBAT STAGE1



WHAT HAS WORKED OUT WELL

- Pitch/tuning imperfections **can kick ass**
- Don’t be afraid to experiment, **go wild with ideas**
- Vocals!
- **Our formula:** mix slavic folk style with contemporary sound people expect



CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Every review we read highlighted music as strong part of the game. And we read a lot!
- TW3 soundtrack has spawned lots of fan covers - over 50 and counting, including Malukah & Taylor Davis
- **Don’t be afraid to experiment**, be a rebel
- Stay true to yourself, love your work, people will hear that in your music
- Don’t be afraid of vocals!

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THE
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WILD HUNT
THANK YOU